



VIP: Healthy VIEWS

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When you first enroll in Medicare, you have a benefit called the “Welcome to Medicare” preventive visit. After that, you can schedule an annual wellness visit once a year. There’s no cost to you, and the payoff can be huge.

Make the most of your yearly wellness visit

Seeing your doctor when you feel fine doesn’t seem right. But an annual wellness visit can help you stay your healthiest. It’s a chance for you and your doctor to talk about preventing disease or finding it early when it is easy to treat.

What to expect

At your annual visit, you will work with your doctor to create or update a prevention plan. This plan helps you prevent disease and disability.

As part of the visit, you’ll also complete a questionnaire called a “health risk assessment.” By answering the questions carefully and completely, you can get the most value from your visit.

Your doctor also may:

- Review your personal and family health history
- Update a list of your medications and other health care providers
- Track your height, weight, and blood pressure
- Ask about any problems you’re having with daily

activities (such as difficulty with walking or keeping track of your medicines)

- Look for signs of problems with memory

How you benefit

Based on this assessment, your doctor will provide personalized health advice. In some cases, your doctor might refer you to other programs, such as ones to help you:

- Prevent falls
- Quit smoking
- Lose weight

Your doctor may also tell you when you next need to get shots and screening tests. These tests help you find certain diseases at an early stage, when they’re most treatable. Medicare covers many tests at no cost to you.



Give good health a shot this fall

Most strains of the flu virus are highly contagious. Once you catch it, the virus will infect your respiratory system, causing some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea, especially in children

Flu can also lead to serious complications like pneumonia. Your best protection against the flu is to get vaccinated. Learn how the flu shot protects you and your family.

3 steps to fight the flu



1. Get your flu shot.



2. Stop germs by washing your hands and covering your mouth when you cough.



3. Take antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

Test your flu shot knowledge

Are these statements about the flu shot true (T) or false (F)?

1. I got the flu shot last year, so I don't have to worry about getting it this year.
2. Some people cannot get the flu shot.
3. Vaccination of high-risk people is especially important.

The answer is ...

1. **False.** You should get a flu shot every year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises to get the shot as soon as it's available, since flu season can begin as early as October. Check www.flu.gov for information about the 2017–2018 flu shot, including where to find it in your area.
2. **True.** Children younger than 6 months cannot get the shot. But they are at high risk for serious flu illness. It is up to the people around them to get their flu shots to help protect infants.
3. **True.** Some people are at risk for serious flu complications, including death. These include young children, pregnant women, and people older than age 65. This also includes people with chronic illnesses like asthma, diabetes, and heart and lung diseases.

6 tips for improving mental health

Emotional health can improve your relationships, work performance, and physical health. Learn some lifestyle changes that can help boost your mood.

1 Seek social support.

Friends, parents, and siblings can provide support when you're going through a hard time. A neighbor, religious leader, or counselor may also offer good advice. Confide in people whom you respect and trust.



2 Join a support group.

A support group for your specific situation, such as dealing with grief or living with depression, can introduce you to like-minded people. You can learn from others' experiences and grow by sharing your story with others.



3 Read up.

If you've been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, learn as much as you can about it. The National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov) provides mental health information. Reading more can help you make decisions about your care.



4 Work up a sweat.

A quick walk can improve your mood for hours. In fact, it takes only five minutes of exercise to start relieving stress.



5 Cope with stress.

Take steps to reduce stress and change how you respond to stressful situations. Sometimes counting to 10 or 20 can give you the pause you need to relax and regroup.

6 Take care of yourself.

Sleep enough. Eat well. Exercise regularly. Take deep breaths when you're stressed. These solutions may seem simple, but they work. Schedule time for yourself, including downtime to relax and do things that you enjoy.



Reach out for help if needed

Help is available if you are considering suicide or going through an emotional crisis. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)**. A person trained to assist in a crisis will talk you through the situation. Someone is available 24/7.

If you are in immediate danger of hurting yourself or someone else, call **911**.

What you need to know about high blood pressure drugs

About two-thirds of Americans ages 60 and older have high blood pressure. And most need medicine to get the problem under control.

When high blood pressure isn't treated, it raises your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. It also increases the risk for heart failure, kidney failure, and early death.

Several types of drugs are used to treat high blood pressure. Each affects the body in its own way. Knowing how your medicine works can help you understand why taking it is so important.

Common blood pressure-lowering drugs

Type of medicine	Examples	How they work	Possible side effects
ACE inhibitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enalapril (Vasotec) lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril) ramipril (Altace) <p><i>Tip: Look for drug names ending in "pril."</i></p>	Relax and widen the blood vessels by affecting a chemical called angiotensin	Cough, dizziness, tiredness, headache, sleep problems, fast heartbeat
Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> candesartan (Atacand) losartan (Cozaar) valsartan (Diovan) <p><i>Tip: Look for drug names ending in "sartan."</i></p>	Help the blood vessels stay opened up	Sore throat, sinus problems, heartburn, dizziness, diarrhea, back pain
Beta-blockers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> atenolol (Tenormin) metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol-XL) nadolol (Corgard) <p><i>Tip: Look for drug names ending in "ol."</i></p>	Cause the heart to beat with less force	Tiredness, upset stomach, diarrhea, constipation, headache, dizziness
Calcium channel blockers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> amlodipine (Norvasc, Lotrel) diltiazem (Cardizem, Tiazac) verapamil (Calan SR, Covera-HS) 	Relax and widen the blood vessels by affecting calcium	Drowsiness, headache, upset stomach, swollen ankles, flushed (warm) feeling
Diuretics ("water pills")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> furosemide (Lasix) hydrochlorothiazide (Esidrix, Hydrodiuril) <p>Combinations of two diuretics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spironolactone + hydrochlorothiazide (Aldactazide) triamterene + hydrochlorothiazide (Dyazide, Maxzide) 	Remove excess water and sodium from the body, which decreases blood volume	Dizziness, frequent urination, headache, thirst, muscle cramps, upset stomach

If you're on one or more of these medicines, let your doctor know if you experience any problems. Keep taking it every day for as long as your doctor recommends, even if you're feeling fine and your blood pressure is down. That small step can bring the big reward of a healthier future.



4 common health problems in women

It's a good idea to be aware of some of the top threats to women's health. Watch for their signs, discuss them with your doctor, and be proactive about preventing them. Here are a few you should know.

One in eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. You can't control some risk factors for breast cancer. But you may be able to lower your risk if you:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit your alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day
- Get 150 minutes of physical activity, such as brisk walking, each week
- Don't smoke

What you should do: Women should receive mammograms to screen for breast cancer every other year starting at age 50. This advice comes from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. But talk with your doctor about how often you should be screened.

2. Lung cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related death for men and women. If you smoke, your risk for lung cancer is 13 times greater compared to a woman who has never smoked.

Lung cancer is a very deadly disease. A screening test is available that can help find it in its early stages, when it's most treatable.

What you should do: If you're between ages 55 and 80 and smoke or have quit within the past 15 years, ask your doctor whether you're a candidate for this screening.

3. Depression

Women are twice as likely to suffer from depression as men. Certain factors may increase your risk for depression, such as:

- Genetics
- Menopause
- Having a baby
- Stress

What you should do: If you think you may be depressed, seek help. Treatments such as medications and counseling can help.

4. Heart disease

About one in four American women will die of heart disease. Some risk factors for heart disease are the same for women and men. This includes smoking and having high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Women have some more risk factors.

The drop in estrogen that occurs with menopause increases your risk for heart disease. However, taking hormones after menopause does not help. This actually increases the risk for a heart attack.

What you should do: Discuss your risk factors with your doctor, as well as the changes you can make to reduce your chances of developing heart disease.



Have arthritis?

Try a dose of yoga

There's a reason that stretching feels so good. It's healthy for you. In fact, even if you experience the pain and stiffness of arthritis, stretching should be part of your plan to stay healthy.

The American College of Rheumatology recommends stretching at least three to five days a week. When you reach, extend, and twist that often, your joints and surrounding muscles are less likely to stiffen. You'll be more likely to stay active and do more things without pain.

Yoga is a simple way to work stretching into your day. It combines stretching with stress-busting techniques, such as breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness. A recent study in *The Journal of Rheumatology* found that yoga helped people

with rheumatoid and knee osteoarthritis feel better both physically and mentally.

Before doing yoga, check with your doctor or physical therapist to see whether there are stretches you should avoid. Once you get the OK, take these steps:

1. **Do your homework.** Taking a gentle yoga class is a great way to get started. A teacher can guide you. But don't stop there. Practicing at home can help you stay strong and flexible between sessions and stick with it.
2. **Smooth your moves.** You may have heard of downward dog, Warrior II, or various other poses. But those names are
3. **Use yoga props.** Blocks, straps, blankets, and chairs can reduce the angle of each stretch and soften the pressure to make yoga easier on your joints. When you're on your hands and knees, for example, placing a blanket under your knees can make the stretch more comfortable.

just yogaspeak for a variety of stretches, like gentle forward bends, backbends, twists, and balances. Done correctly, many yoga poses can be safe for those with arthritis. Don't push it. Yoga stretches can be challenging, but they shouldn't be painful.



Reach for the skies

For more ideas on how to safely stretch your limits, visit the Arthritis Foundation at www.arthritis.org and search for "two minute exercises" for short videos to improve your range of motion and flexibility.



By the numbers: Breast cancer

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease. Test your knowledge of breast cancer by filling in each blank below with the correct number from this list:

8

20

99

50

1. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that most women get screening mammograms every other year, starting at age _____.
2. Getting a mammogram takes only about _____ minutes.



3. Roughly 1 out of _____ women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during her lifetime.
4. Six out of every 10 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed early through mammograms. The five-year survival rate for these early cases is _____ percent.

1. 50 2. 20 3. 8 4. 99

ANSWERS

Healthy Recipe



Chicken soup

Ingredients

- 6 cups canned low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 large carrots, scraped and diced
- 1 large stalk of celery, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- 2 cups diced cooked chicken
- 1 cup canned plum tomatoes, coarsely chopped, with liquid
- 3 cups cooked egg noodles

Directions

Put all ingredients except noodles into a pot. Bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 minutes or until carrots are cooked. Put a half-cup of noodles into each bowl. Ladle soup over noodles.

Per serving

Serves six; serving size is 1 cup. Each serving provides: 257 calories, 5 g total fat, 63 mg cholesterol, 195 mg sodium, 30 g total carbohydrate, 3 g dietary fiber, and 24 g protein.





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